



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Beta Sciences / Pharmaceutical Sciences
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Pharmacy

destination city & country	Beijing, China
name university abroad	Tsinghua University
start date	1 / 9 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	31 / 12 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

The application process wasn't that difficult. Exchange Office will give you the information on how to apply for enrolment. Be aware that if you did not receive a mail around February-March, you should ask for it. Due to an error in the mail-system, I had to rush to prepare my documents. Also, make sure your passport doesn't expire for at least half a year (or better more than a year). You'll receive the letter of acceptance quite late, in July. However, usually when you get selected by UU, you'll most likely enrol into the host university as well.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Exchange Office responds very quickly and to-the-point. It was a nice experience. They were even available in the summer holiday. It was very useful to receive information about the credit conversion of UU as well.

academic preparation

I did not need any academic preparation at all.

language preparation

I have some pre-knowledge about the Chinese language. However, I did not actively prepare anything. In China, most people do not speak English. It was quite hard to communicate with local students or even some teachers in English. It is quite possible to survive without Chinese knowledge, as you might encounter friends who can help you. However, it will make your life somewhat easier.

finances

The dormitory price is 80 RMB/day for an AB- or single-room. Food was really cheap in canteens, around 15 – 20 RMB's for a whole day. Food outside the canteen or in Western canteens are more expensive, however still relatively cheap compared to the Netherlands. Books were around 70 RMB's per course. I spent more money on travelling and leisure.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I was enrolled into the school of biological sciences. There were only 2 English courses (which wouldn't get me any credits anyways, due to overlap) and both in the same time period. The amount of English courses were limited and often quickly full. In the medical department, there were less courses available than for example in the economics department. I followed 1 course inside my department, 2 Chinese courses and 1 Accounting course. Their courses were quite diverse.

academic quality of education activities



The academic quality of education is average. The courses I took were quite easy and not challenging at all. It is relatively easy to get high grades. Their way of giving education is different as well. With the exception of Chinese courses, teachers usually gave 3-hour lectures (which was mentally tiring). I particularly found the testing very lacking. Either I was not inclined to study at all or teachers went very easy on the rules. However, this is limited to the courses I took. From friends, I've heard that some courses are hard. Engineering classes are of very good academic quality. Medical classes are disappointing.

Also, in addition to self-study, they have homework which has to be submitted every week. This grade will count towards your final grade. Furthermore, admittance will be graded as well. There is no room for a re-exam.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

I did not often make use of their services and when I did, I usually came at the wrong moments. For example, I received the information package in July and the next day when I had a question the contact person was already on a holiday until the start of the semester (not really a great time to send the information package...). It takes very long to receive a message. Calling is faster, than by mail. However, when it's an urgent matter, they're usually really quick.

transfer of credits

You should always contact the Board of Examiners of your own department to ask for confirmation of your study plan. Do ask how many credits you'll get before going and each time if something unforeseen happens that will change your plans. I got a conversion ratio of 1 Tsinghua credit to 1,5 ECTS. This means that if you need 30 ECTS, you'll need the maximum amount of Tsinghua credits (20) in one semester. It isn't common to take 20 credits. You might be delayed with your studies. I would recommend to get more credits at UU in advance if you don't want to get delayed. I only needed 15 ECTS. Furthermore, if you are a pharmacy student: you should know that you can't do any pharmacy courses which would overlap with your mayor program (at least it would not get you any credits). I don't know if it's the same with other departments. I also suggest to get into a department with lots of English classes (if your Chinese isn't sufficient), since Tsinghua has a policy stating that students should take a maximum of 8 credits outside of the department you go enrolled in. This means you have to get 12 credits in your chosen department. However, if you notify the host university in advance, they will often make an exception for you. Also, if you are going in your last semester (just before graduation), please note that you need the transcript a.s.a.p. Otherwise you might find yourself in a complex situation, in which you might not graduate. Usually it will take Tsinghua 2 – 3 months to send you your transcript.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

Could have been better. It was really confusing. First of all, they sent the information package to the home university at a really late time in July. It contained the information about the documents you needed. However, once after I arrived at the airport/campus, I had to figure everything by myself. Luckily, there was a WeChat group to ask questions to other exchange students. After settling and registration, they will give you a complete guide on how to survive in China and at the campus. However, by then the info comes too late. It tells you more about visa, canteen cards, bank account, SIM-cards etc. but you should have done these things before registration (with exception of the bank account). Furthermore, they have a welcome lecture in which they'll explain their regulations and other important stuff.

accommodation

I lived in the Asian Youth Center. I was chosen to be placed in that dormitory. If you are going as well, check your spam-mailbox. The confirmation might have been placed in there. If you are going selected for the AYC, you don't need to book your dormitory in the usual way. The AYC is a building where cultural exchange is more



actively promoted. You'll live in an AB-room with a local student of the same sex. The space is bigger than the normal international dormitories (Zijing Buildings). It includes a bathroom and a living room as well. Advantages to living in the AYC are: it's located in the middle of a big campus, so you are definitely closer to a lot of teaching buildings, it is located next to Qing Fen canteen and a supermarket, it has a lot of comfortable study rooms and (almost) every Sunday events will be organized. The only disadvantage is that you have to do the cleaning yourself in comparison to the Zijing buildings where cleaners come twice/thrice a week.

leisure & culture

There are lots of things to do. You can join associations (they have over 50 clubs) or sports clubs. There's also a Chinese conversation center, which will hold events from time to time. AYC has its own activities as well. And there are lots of symposia to join (but more toward the political aspect). In addition, Beijing is a beautiful place for sight-seeing! And in holidays, it is easy to travel outside of Beijing.

suggestions/tips

None

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

I would recommend this university and destination. I loved this one-time experience and like every exchange student I met, I would love to go again! It's truly an unforgettable experience for life. While I really disliked their medical program, I still think it's definitely worth it. I loved meeting new people (now: amazing friends for life) and it was very interesting to learn about other cultures. Tsinghua University has a diverse group of exchange students and very kind and inspiring local students!

do you have any additional advice or comments?

If you do not want to delay your studies, prepare thoroughly in advance.

Don't take ExpressVPN, it doesn't work very well.

If you can avoid it, don't write a thesis in China. Due to the Google issues there.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	REBO
level	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Economics & Business Economics

destination city & country	Beijing, China
name university abroad	Tsinghua University
start date	17 / 09 / 2018 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	20 / 01 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION

exchange application process

Application process at UU went very smoothly. However, confirmation from their side came pretty late. Although being accepted by UU means pretty much that the host university will accept you as well, it would be nice to receive that information a bit earlier, and not only in July.

counselling & support at Utrecht University

Since Tsinghua is a university-wide partner university, my department did not know beforehand how many ECTS each course would be and on which level.

academic preparation

Skills being taught here are quite at par with the skills required over there.

language preparation

As Chinese is a very difficult language, I did not prepare myself at all. In order to speak only a bit Chinese, it would be necessary to follow quite intensive courses back home. Since I simply did not have the time to do that, I decided to take the risk to go without any language knowledge.

finances

The dormitories have to be paid up front which is around €1300 for one semester. But once that has been paid, life on campus is relatively cheap, especially the food in the canteens.

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD

study programme (content and organisational issues)

I was enrolled in the School of Economics & Management (SEM), but I also followed courses in departments like School of Marxism or School of Public Policy and Management.

academic quality of education activities

A bit better than in Utrecht. Many teachers knew how to engage the classroom and therefore made the lectures very interesting. However, the only form of teaching is through a lecture; there are no such things as tutorials. As some classes are very large, there will be hardly any personal contact with the teachers. Some classes are small, however, so a lecture feels like a tutorial. In those kind of classes, a lot of personal contact is involved. However, in most cases, the Teaching Assistant (TA) is the one you should contact before you contact the teacher him-/herself.

Another thing is that they keep you busy throughout the semester: they give a lot of assignments that range from simple homework exercises to writing reports. It has frequently occurred that there was a week where I



had an assignment for every course I was following.
In conclusion, the teaching methods are a bit different than what you might be used to, although you will adapt quickly.

counselling & support at receiving university abroad

N.A.

transfer of credits

N.A.

STUDENT LIFE

welcome & orientation programme

Lacking. The only thing we received beforehand was where to go to in order to receive the keys for the dormitory. Besides that, any practical information (where and how to get a SIM card, open a bank account, buy a bike etc.) was lacking. Orientation programme differed per department.

accommodation

Decent. Definitely not bad, but depending on what you are used to, you might need to adapt at first. The big benefit is that your room will be cleaned around 3 times a week and that there is a reception in the building to keep an eye on everything

leisure & culture

A lot of opportunity to join one of the student associations, ranging from sports like swimming, skiing or basketball, or things like calligraphy. In addition, the campus offers all kind of facilities, like a running course, basketball courts, a swimming pool etc. Moreover, there are a lot of events organized on the university campus like talks by CEO's, nobel prize winners or other people that take an important role in our society, or theatre plays .

suggestions/tips

A bit more information beforehand about what to do when you arrive etc. would be very useful. Also an earlier confirmation would be appreciated since that way, people can buy their flight tickets in time, prepare their visa etc.

CONCLUSIONS

would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain

Yes. In the first place, it is considered as one of the best universities in China, especially when it comes to engineering. The staff working there is very knowledgeable and has a lot of experiences which they incorporate in their classes. They also organize a lot of talks by nobel prize winners, CEO's and other people that take an important role in our society.

do you have any additional advice or comments?

As the campus is quite far away from what we know as the 'city Beijing' you are spending a lot of time inside the campus (especially since all of your friends and classmates live there as well!). Trying to get somewhere involves taking a taxi (which is a risk sometimes, as the traffic is terrible), or the subway system. A bike is also very convenient to buy in order to move yourself on campus or around the neighbourhood of the campus. Going on bike to the 'city center' is theoretically possible, but since this is around 15-20 kilometer away, it takes quite some time to get there.



UU Study Abroad Report Form

faculty/college	Natural Sciences
level	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor's <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> master's
name study programme	Computing Science

destination city & country	Beijing, China
name university abroad	Tsinghua University
start date	24 / 02 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)
end date	30 / 06 / 2019 (dd/mm/yyyy)

PREPARATION	
exchange application process	
	Really easy in general. I used Osiris to apply. After a while I heard the good news that I was admitted. Of course for China there is some paper work to be done, but the host university provided all the papers etc.
counselling & support at Utrecht University	
	I didn't have any problems so I would say I didn't need any counselling or support from my home university.
academic preparation	
	Nothing.
language preparation	
	I studied a little of Chinese but far from enough. It is also not really possible to learn this by yourself in a short period of time. I took a Chinese class in THU, not mandatory. But recommended. Its fun, you learn a lot fast and it will make you stay in china much easier.
finances	
	China is cheaper than Amsterdam. I would recommend to bring extra money to travel..

STUDY ABROAD PERIOD



study programme (content and organisational issues)
Computer science
academic quality of education activities
High level in computer science. It is one of the best in the world. If you take courses which are also available for Chinese students expect much work.
counselling & support at receiving university abroad
I didn't have any problems so I would say I didn't need any counselling or support from my host university.
transfer of credits
Not sure how this will go.

STUDENT LIFE
welcome & orientation programme
There is some welcome but mostly for paper works and setting up things like a Chinese bank. There would be space for improvement here. Although I made plenty of friends so the results is there anyways. Also there where buddies available, which I do recommend.
accommodation
Good! I had my own bathroom, bedroom and living room for ~300 euro a month on campus. If you choose to be outside of campus expect to pay double.
leisure & culture
Amazing! China has so much to offer. You could travel & learn here for a couple of years and not be done. Expect to be surprised every day and have new experiences.
suggestions/tips
Try to make friends with the locals. Use your free time to travel around and don't stay in Beijing to much.

CONCLUSIONS
would you recommend this university/destination abroad to others? please explain
100%. Amazing University. The ranking is going up as well every year, so also great for your resume. I learned about my subject Computer Science. I learned Chinese language and made friends all over the world (China, Korea, USA, Australia and much European countries) and saw much of china at the same time. Last half year I did not have that much sleep but it was only because I had such a good time. Additionally, I am familiar now with Chinese culture, habits and language etc. I believe that many big Chinese companies will come to our markets and will be more important than now. With a THU experience you will be 10 steps a head to every other non-Chinese student. Beside all these benefits which are good for the future, Beijing is a very living city. Everyday there is so much new things to explore and try. Promised if you go here is a lot of fun and a very exiting semester. At this moment I am almost going back but I would be happy to stay longer.
do you have any additional advice or comments?



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	Law
Level:	bachelor
Name degree programme:	Rechtsgeleerdheid

Destination city & country	Beijing, China
Name host institution	Tsinghua University
Purpose of exchange	study/courses
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	18/02/2018
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	21/07/2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The application process was sometimes a little bit messy and stressful, because it was not always clear what I needed to do and which documents I needed to submit. But in the end this was all figured out and from then on the process went smoothly.

Counselling/support at Utrecht University:

The support from Utrecht University was well done, I could ask any questions I wanted to ask.

Academic preparation:

I did not prepare in an academic way.

Language preparation:

Before coming to Beijing, I took Chinese courses at Babel in Utrecht. I really recommend taking Chinese courses before going to Beijing, because not everyone speaks English and it can make your life here a lot easier.

Finances:

I must admit that at first I expected Beijing to be less expensive. The food on campus and the accommodation prices are quite cheap, but if you want to go out this can be very expensive. It depends on your needs and life style I guess.

Study abroad period



Study programme (concerning content and organisational issues):
I studied Chinese language at the International Chinese Language and Culture Center. Overall, everything is well organised, although some things can be really (unnecessary) bureaucratic in my opinion.
Academic quality of education:
The quality of the program is quite high, my Chinese really improved here.
Counselling/support at host institution:
If you need it, counselling and support (in English) is available.
Transfer of credits:
It is important to mention that the maximum credit load you can take at Tsinghua consists of 20 credits. If you want to get 30 ECTS, this might just be enough or not even enough, depending on the judgement of your exam committee in the Netherlands. If you are taking 20 credits, this can be a heavy workload.
Student life
Welcome/orientation programme:
Tsinghua has a Buddy program, which I recommend signing up for. Furthermore, they organise an orientation meeting. If you are arriving at Tsinghua during Chinese New Year, do not be surprised if all the shops are closed and there is no one on campus. This is normal and after the holiday Tsinghua will turn into a lively place.
Accommodation:
I stayed on campus. I got lucky, because I got to stay in the Asian Youth Center (AYC), where the rooms are slightly bigger and you share a living room with a Chinese roomie. The rent is about 300 euro's a month.
Leisure/culture:
Beijing is a really big city so there is a lot to do and explore! The Chinese culture is very fascinating and I think you can never stop learning more about it.
Suggestions/tips:
Before you arrive in China, be sure to download Wechat. This app is your key to the life in Beijing, you can literally do anything with it: pay, order food, chat etc. OFO is also very useful, it is an app that allows you to rent bikes anywhere for a very reasonable price. Furthermore, installing a VPN is practical, because in China applications such as Facebook and Whatsapp are blocked.
Conclusions
Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:
I would definitely recommend Beijing. If you want to experience a totally different culture and study at one of China's best universities, Tsinghua is the place.
Do you have any additional advice or comments?:
Can students contact you for additional info? If so, please write down how they can get in touch



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Family name:	xxx
First name:	xxx
Student number:	xxx
Faculty/college:	Humanities
Level:	X bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	History

Destination city & country	Beijing, China
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Tsinghua University
Purpose of exchange	X study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	12/02/2018 (traveled first, arrived on 24/02/2018)
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	10/07/2018

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

Tsinghua University is a registered UU exchange partner. UU handles the application process. I encountered no difficulty in Tsinghua's authorization of the application, and was put into contact with the university's exchange manager after the application was finalized.

Counselling/support at home university:

The international office will provide you with all the help you need. Be sure not to wait with your own preparations: buying tickets, managing your DUO loan, etc.

Academic preparation:



I needed no specific preparation. From friends here I've heard quite a lot about courses that were either too easy or too difficult for them - I think it's a matter of just finding out.

Language preparation:

Although you will probably be surrounded by international students, the main language on campus is Chinese. Any Chinese you learn before arriving will be very useful. Locals (count in: campus staff) don't speak English, students speak it medium to well but most hesitate to use it. Useful: speech-to-speech translator apps and written directions on your phone when talking to taxi drivers!

Finances:

Life on campus is generally cheap. Be sure to check out the available scholarships.

- Food costs around €3-4 per day
- Dorm rent is around €320 per month.
- Outside campus, food is more expensive but still cheap compared to Dutch standards.
- Beijing subway costs max €0,80 per trip, taxis are €5-10 for most destinations in the city's central areas.
- A taxi from the airport is €15-20.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

I followed an intensive Chinese class (18hrs. per week) here. These are offered on any level by the university's ICLCC language center. I did not know about the option to follow these courses before coming, but I switched after discussing with Tsinghua's exchange coordinator. I think you can also follow part of this program, next to other courses, but it will be less effective.

Tsinghua offers high-quality courses in fields like engineering and business. The English-language ones are usually only taken by internationals. If you speak Chinese, you can join Chinese-language courses too. Be on time with your course enrolment: popular courses fill up in about 15 minutes, which makes them almost impossible to get into.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

I am very happy with the quality of the language courses I followed. The environment of different levels of Chinese speakers is very stimulating. As far as I know, general English-language courses at the university are good, although they don't always meet student's expectations, but examination standards are usually easy to pass for all students.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The exchange coordinator of the university is open to all questions, i.e. regarding study planning and campus life. I have no experience with other support systems within the university.

Transfer of credits:

Tsinghua's international office will help you with this. If you follow language courses, do not expect to be awarded 30 ECTS at UU. Examination boards generally do not regard these as academic, and will award points according to the hours spent in class.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

Tsinghua does not offer a very extensive orientation programme, but there are some activities where you can discover university life. Consider joining one of the many student organizations!



Accommodation:

International students are grouped together in the international dorms on campus (approx. €320 per month), that offer good facilities. Most of your life will take place on campus, where you can eat, study, hang out, do sports, and shop. The campus lifestyle will give you the opportunity to make many friends, join interesting activities (academic, sports, culture, etc.) around campus, and provides a good environment for effective studying.

Some students live outside campus, which I think think will cost you around the same. Some of the advantages are being able to speak more Chinese on the streets, making friends from other universities, and discovering some more of the city.

Leisure/culture:

- On campus, you can play soccer, basketball, tennis, swim, run, work out in the gym, etc. Some are free of cost, some are not.
- Traveling around Beijing is easier than you might expect: the subway gets you anywhere.
- If you want to, you will have no trouble at all finding your way into the city's nightlife.
- I've travelled to some of China's large cities, which by convenient high-speed train costs around €100-200 for a return ticket.

Suggestions/tips:

- I think you can check into the dorms at any time, but you will only get your room key - no food card or internet access! Be patient, you will probably be able to take care of that the next day. In the meanwhile, ask an international student for help in order to buy food or send a message to your mum.
- If you applied to get a buddy, check your spam folder regularly for their introduction e-mail!
- Before you come to China, get a VPN in order to surf on blocked websites (anything Facebook, anything Google, etc.) and protect your privacy. A paid one, the free ones are trash and will sell your information. ExpressVPN is perfect.
- There are enough food options available on campus for vegetarians and vegans, you can even join their club.
- You will be able to apply for a Chinese bank account (become a real Beijinger and use Wechat to pay for everything!) and a telephone contract after you arrive on campus.
- Getting a visa takes less than a week and, with your Tsinghua admission letter, should go smoothly. It cost me €125. You will probably get a single-entry, 6 month visa. You can 'buy' more entries on campus. I was not required to do a medical examination while I was here.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would definitely recommend coming to Tsinghua. If you're interested in China, here is a great place to be. Some of China's best students are here, and their reputation and events make Tsinghua to be a hub of talent and innovation where, if you're interested, you can find out the latest in economics, technology, Chinese politics, and other topics and develop yourself very quickly.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

China is a great country to travel in, and Tsinghua offers many opportunities to follow your



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Geneeskunde
Level:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> bachelor <input type="checkbox"/> master <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input type="checkbox"/> other
Name degree programme:	Biomedical Sciences

Destination city & country	Beijing, China
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Tsinghua University
Purpose of exchange	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> study/courses <input type="checkbox"/> work placement <input type="checkbox"/> field work <input type="checkbox"/> other
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	31/08/2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	27/01/2017

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

My application process probably was a bit more complicated than most. My original choice for destination was Singapore, as my degree programme had a direct contract with the NUS. I imagine either my grades or my motivation letter weren't good enough, as sadly I wasn't chosen. The same happened with my second choice, which was Taiwan. In the end, it was decided I would go to my third choice, Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. I had some trouble with my visa application as well, and I found the online application site of Tsinghua University to be confusing at some points. Thankfully, in the end, everything worked out, and my application was successful.

Counselling/support at home university:

The counselling and support at the international office of Utrecht was great. I had a lot of questions during my preparation, and my emails were always answered quickly. Furthermore, I had no problems making an appointment when I needed to talk face to face, and the counselling was very personal and I felt that my counsellor really did her best for me.

Academic preparation:

At Tsinghua University, you only really know which courses you'll be taking when you are already on campus and applying for them. Because of this I did no real academic preparation, as I didn't know what I would have to prepare for.

Language preparation:

A few months before my departure I downloaded a Chinese learning app that I practiced with from time to time.

Finances:

I applied for the grants and scholarships that I could apply for, but had no luck in being chosen as



one of the recipients. My finances for my exchange consisted of the student finances from the Dutch government, my own savings as well as some financial help from my parents.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

Before going to China, I received a list of courses at Tsinghua University that are given in English. It was quite a long list with enough courses that I found interesting, and from these I selected several courses that I would want to take. The only problem I had with this, was that the list didn't contain information about the timetables of the courses, so I didn't know which courses would overlap. This led to some trouble when applying for my courses when I arrived in Tsinghua, as I had to choose between some that overlapped.

In the end, I took 5 courses.

My final timetable was similar to what I am used to at Utrecht, but I did spend more time studying outside of those hours.

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The academic quality at Tsinghua University differs greatly between courses. Some just had the teacher droning on facts in a monotone voice, but others were more interactive and had us visit research facilities and showed real world examples of the content that we were studying.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

As far as I know, there was only one (but maybe two) exchange coordinator(s) for all the international students at Tsinghua university. As there are 2000-3000 exchange students, this is way too little. I could hardly get hold of my coordinator when I had questions, and it would take 1-2 weeks before I got a response via email, if ever.

Transfer of credits:

The transfer of credits from Tsinghua university to the UU (at least to my faculty) is with a very low conversion. Most international students I met while abroad had a conversion of credits that was 1:2, or even higher. So 15 Tsinghua credits would leave you with 30ECT. Sadly, my faculty calculated the conversion from 1:1,5. This left me with too little ECT points, and I must take extra courses in the hope that I can compensate this discrepancy. But, I do feel my exchange was more than worth the extra work.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

The orientation consisted of a 2-hour opening talk by our exchange coordinator about being an exchange student at Tsinghua University, and some safety instructions from the Tsinghua security officer.

A few weeks in the student associations have orientations for those interested in joining.

Accommodation:

The international student's dorms at Tsinghua University are clean and have more than enough room. You can choose between double and single rooms, and you share bathrooms and showers with the rest of your floor.

But, you do have to be quick to apply if you want one of the rooms, as there are more international students than dorm rooms available. If you cannot get a room there are enough apartments just



outside of campus that you can rent, but you can expect them to be more expensive.

Leisure/culture:

Beijing is an amazing place to live, and you will never find the time to explore it fully during your time on exchange. There is just too much to do and visit in the capital of China, and if you are an active person you can fill every weekend with activities.

The campus itself is very big and has a lot of places where you can just hang out and sit outside. It also has several cafes and restaurants to sit and talk with your friends.

Suggestions/tips:

Apply to the buddy program at Tsinghua, which connects you with a native Chinese student. It is very easy to just interact with other exchange students, but I would suggest trying to make some Chinese friends because you will be able to experience Chinese culture more directly.

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

I would definitely recommend Tsinghua University to others. Although I had some obstacles, my exchange was totally worth the trouble. Beijing is a city that I think everyone should experience at least once in their life, and Tsinghua University is a good place to start. People also consider it the best university in China, and there are a lot of open minded students that would love to introduce an exchange student to Chinese culture.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:



UU Study Abroad Report Form

Faculty/college:	Geoscience
Level:	<input type="checkbox"/> bachelor
Name degree programme:	Human Geography & Planning

Destination city & country	Beijing, China
Name host institution and/or company/organisation	Tsinghua University
Purpose of exchange	<input type="checkbox"/> study/courses
Departure date (dd/mm/yyyy)	4 Sept. 2016
Return date (dd/mm/yyyy)	18 Jan. 2017

Preparation

Exchange/placement application process:

The placement application process was not really difficult. There was a checklist with things to do and to prepare, which made it easy to go through the process step by step.

Counselling/support at home university:

You get in touch with your exchange coordinator via email and whenever you have a question you can ask it (throughout the whole exchange period). A few months before leaving for China a pre-departure meeting is organized to get in touch with fellow exchange students (who all go to the same region) and to learn from students who had already been there (unfortunately, there was no one from Tsinghua University last year to tell me about it, and I couldn't go the pre-departure meeting myself this year to tell about my experiences in China).

Although Tsinghua was not my first choice, I really enjoyed my stay in Beijing. I wished, however, that we got better information about how universities select their students, and what the role of Utrecht University is in that process. If the selection procedure is, for example, totally based on grades, Utrecht University could tell you in advance what your chances are and whether or not you should aim at another university. In short, in my opinion they could keep students more up to date about the process, and the selection process could be a bit more transparent.

Academic preparation:

There was no need for academic preparation (if I remember correctly).

Language preparation:

Language preparation might be an important topic for students who would like to enrol at Tsinghua University, and go to China in particular. The English-speaking of teachers and professors is normally fluent. Most of the teachers studied in the US themselves or went to Europe, so you don't need to worry about not being able to talk to teachers in English. This also implies for talking to other students; most of the time they speak sufficiently English.

This changes, however, when you want to organize a trip, go shopping (on/off campus), go to the canteen or want to ask stuff to the secretary at the bottom floor of the Tsinghua dormitories (every dormitory flat has a front desk with personnel). I found myself really amazed about the latter: how could it be that "the" top university of China, which receives hundreds of international students every year, does not have personnel that could speak, let alone understand, a few English words. This can be really annoying sometimes, since you feel that you are expected to talk/understand Chinese, which most international students can't. I wish I knew this in advance to prepare myself a little bit. Once the semester began I enrolled in a Chinese class, which I highly recommend, because it is not only helpful, it is also great fun, very interesting and lets you understand the basics in a fairly short notice.

Whenever you go off-campus don't expect people to speak English, since most Chinese people can't. Try to get to know some Chinese students because they are really friendly and love to help you out or go on a day-trip with you. Besides the fun, it is really helpful because as an international you get scammed easily.

Finances:

If you receive a Chinese government scholarship is it really helpful to open a bank account at the Bank of China. It takes a bit of endurance and patience to get it done and it takes a while until you receive the money because of all sorts of Chinese rules, but when you finally have your bank card, it doesn't cost you any money to use the ATM.

I highly recommend to get a credit card before leaving for China, to bring enough cash (the reason for this is twofold: 1. Chinese pay most of the time using cash or WeChatPay, I will turn to that later. 2. We experienced a two-week malfunction of ATM when using a foreign (credit) card) and to pin large amounts of money at the ATM (because of the possibility of malfunctions and because you pay per transaction when using foreign cards).

If you have a Chinese bank account, I recommend you to pair your bank account with WeChat (the Chinese, and more extended version of Whatsapp) which makes it possible to pay with your phone. Here in Europe it is still in the development phase, but in Beijing you can pay with your phone everywhere, anytime. It is really easy, fun and it saves you some time.

Study/placement abroad period

Study programme/work plan (concerning content and organisational issues):

There were some organisational issues at Tsinghua University that we experienced. First of all, the course syllabus had changed (I tell more about this in "Transfer of Credits") which affected the amount of credits I could get. Secondly we had a malfunction of the course subscription webpage. Because of the overload of students who tried to subscribe to courses at the same time, the system couldn't handle it and this made it almost impossible to subscribe to my desired courses (this in turn had also consequences for my credits).

Academic quality of education/placement activities:

The academic quality of education was, in most courses, good. Most profs and teachers studied in the US or in other Western countries and speak therefore good English. The level of most courses was good, but in some cases it was way above introduction level. You have, however, no idea what kind of level the course really is. And for a non-economic student who took a minor in economics at Tsinghua, that did not make things easier.

I had, for example, the course Introduction to E-Commerce which was really easy. But I also took an introduction course in Investment and Financial Management, which were pretty difficult and were easily as difficult as - if not more difficult than - a third year bachelor course of Human Geography and Planning at Utrecht University.

Unfortunately, back in Utrecht it seems that all courses are treated as 'easy courses which could never be the level of Utrecht University'. This really disappointed me, because how can people in the Netherlands judge that an A+ (in Dutch terms, a 10) in China, is about the same as a 7,5 in The Netherlands. There is no/not much transparency about how your grades are transformed so drastically, and when you ask about it at the International Office, no one knows how it works and you are referred to the website of 'Nuffiq' to find it out yourself.

Counselling/support at host institution/organisation:

The support from Utrecht University while having the course- and credit-trouble at Tsinghua could have been better. Of course, Utrecht University could not fix the problem that caused the problem with subscription to courses. But they could have been a bit more informative with the consequences (less credits) and what that could mean for my minor. Instead I heard that the Board of Examiners would look at it *after* my exchange. This left me in uncertainty whether or not I had enough credits to pass my minor. In the end, I had enough credits, but it would have been more comforting to have known that earlier.

Transfer of credits:

I don't really understand how this works at Utrecht University, but I found it rather strange. On forehand you choose some courses you would like to take at Tsinghua University from the Tsinghua Course syllabus. You then let the Board of Examiners from Utrecht University check it and they let you know if it is okay with them. This is all standard procedure and pretty straightforward.

But once in China, the course syllabus had changed (new academic year, and apparently some courses were no longer available to take) and because of the difficulty to subscribe to courses – the system could not handle all students to use the network to subscribe to courses at once – I was forced to take *different*, and (most important here) *less* courses than I would have liked (and than I had checked by the Board of Examiners). When I mailed the Board of Examiners with the question what this meant for my credits and whether or not I was still able to get enough credits to pass my minor, Utrecht University replied that they would look at it, and judge it, afterwards.

This means that you study in China for 4,5 months without even knowing if you get enough credits to pass your minor. Other Dutch students, most of them from TU Delft, UVA and VU Amsterdam, received information about this issue from their Board of Examiners while *in* China. They knew whether or not they had to take extra courses.

Student life

Welcome/orientation programme:

The orientation programme was just regular, but it came rather late. There was a welcome ceremony one or two weeks (I am not sure about it) after most of the students had to be at Tsinghua University, so all the information given that day was superfluous because we had to find everything out ourselves in the weeks before. In short: if we had the orientation earlier things could have been easier.

Accommodation:

The accommodation at Tsinghua University is okay. When you choose a single room you get enough, but not much space for one person. Included in the rooms are a bed, a desk, one seat, a sink, a small cupboard a closet and a bathroom with toilet. I highly recommend you, however, to buy some pillows to put on the seat (and maybe one to sleep on) and to buy a normal mattress because the Chinese sleep on very thin mattresses (only a few centimetres thick) and underneath the Chinese 'mattress' is a wooden plate. But that is of course personal. Besides this, because the room is a bit sober, you might want to buy some stuff to hang on the walls to decorate the room a little bit. And unless you like a ceiling light that reminds you of a tanning bed, you could also buy yourself a cosier light (but that is, again, personal).

As regards hygiene, it leaves a lot to be desired. Although the rooms are cleaned every two days (and you get new sheets every two weeks), hygiene is not really good. We had a cockroach pest in the building, every room on the floor is cleaned with not too clean water and on top of that the mattress was very dirty: it had hairs and dirt all over it.

Please mind: you have regulated hot-water hours. You can only use hot water from 7am-9am, from 3pm-5pm and from 8pm-11pm. It takes a while, but you get used to it. Besides regulated hot water, the heating in winter is also regulated. You cannot turn the heating on by yourself.

Please mind as well: booking a room at Tsinghua took place in summer and is not that difficult (just follow the instructions). But keep in mind the time difference: the booking was in the middle of the night (in my case).

Leisure/culture:

There are plenty of things to do in and around Beijing. If you think you have seen every tourist hotspot try to hang out with some local students. They can take you to places you didn't know exist and have you try some delicious food as well! Another suggestion: join as many group chats on WeChat as possible to visit clubs for free (you can seriously party like a VIP in Beijing since wealthy Chinese people like to have you at their clubs. Drinks are on them!). Also try to join some student associations to go on trips outside of Beijing. I was a member of the ski association (they ski north of Beijing) but you can go on sailing/hiking trips as well or join a sport association*. I went on a beautiful trip to Inner Mongolia where we rode horses on the steppes and rode camels in the desert.

*about sports, some Chinese people have funny sport habits. They go running, or play tennis, for example, in a suit that we would wear when working at a bank. You don't see this in The Netherlands, so it can be great fun to watch!

Suggestions/tips:

- Install WeChat: **the Chinese do not use WhatsApp**. The app is a combination of Facebook/Instagram and WhatsApp. Besides that, you can pay with the app.
- **Get a credit card:** it is a world-wide accepted card.
- **Bring sufficient cash:** in case of ATM malfunction. And most of the time the Chinese pay with cash (for example in taxis). Keep this in mind when taking a cab from the airport to Tsinghua when you arrive.
- **Pin in large amounts:** using the ATM with foreign cards will cost you transaction costs.
- Open a Bank of China bank account.
- **Get in touch with students**
- **It is not possible to use websites and apps like Google, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, WhatsApp, Netflix and other western apps without a VPN (Virtual Private Network)**. The apps are restricted and blocked by the Chinese government. Try and get a VPN as soon as possible to be able to stay connected with the world outside of

China. I can highly recommend you **Express VPN**. It is a professional and very reliable company. The subscription is for 6 months and will set you back \$60. This sounds like a lot of money, but it is worth it. Try to survive a week without Instagram/WhatsApp etc. and you will find that you really want that VPN. Of course it is possible to get free VPN software as well, I tried it but I didn't like it that much. Besides that, I wasn't sure if it was reliable software.

- **Try and use Taobao:** you can buy literally *anything* online. Buy it today and in a lot of cases you have it delivered at Tsinghua on the same day. Or order food (not on taobao) online. Fancy a Starbucks coffee or some McDonalds in-between your classes? Have it delivered at the building you have class in.
- **Internet:** As a Tsinghua student **you have a limited data amount**, if you run out of gigabytes you have to buy them either online, or at the Main Building.
- **Get a Chinese phone number as soon as possible:** you need it to use WeChat. Ask students or other internationals who already have a Chinese phone number to help you out because it has some formalities, and besides that you can get scammed easily. TIP: it is possible to arrange your phone number at C-Building on the campus. A subscription is very cheap.
- **Bring along a dictionary** (I also had one with images/icons. You can get it at Lonely Planet).
- **Download an air pollution app.** Use the American Embassy data since that data is more reliable than the Chinese data.
- **Buy a smog mask.** It may look a bit silly, and in the first weeks you might not want to wear one. But don't fool yourself: the air quality in Beijing can be very, very bad. We experienced weeks in which you couldn't see a thing beyond 150-200 meters (you can google "smog Beijing" to see it). The air looks a bit grey/yellow, and, especially when it is hot, your skin can feel a bit sticky. Also a good indication: look at your clothes since they might get dirty as well.

To not have to wear a mask all the time when inside (yes, the smog gets inside your room as well), you can buy an Air purifier to get rid of the polluted air in your room (Xiaomi has some of the best. It will cost you around 100Euros. <http://www.mi.com/en/air/>) Just like the VPN, this sounds like a lot of money. And if you are lucky, your stay in Beijing goes along with clean air on most days. But in winter the air quality will probably get worse because of the coal used in factories to heat up the city.

So if you don't want to smoke 40 cigarettes a day (Daily Mail 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-3201954/Breathing-Beijing-s-air-equivalent-smoking-FORTY-cigarettes-day-Smog-map-China-reveals-shocking-extent-pollution.html>) wear a mask & buy yourself an air purifier.

- Try the Chinese food: it is a great experience. **But mind yourself in the first week: your body might have to get used to the Chinese dishes, so bring along some medicines in case you get sick (it was really hard to find a local drug store, and even harder to explain what your complaints are).** I felt ill for almost a week (but don't worry, (most of) the food has a great taste)
- Enjoy your stay and make lots of trips: China is beautiful!

Conclusions

Would you recommend this host organisation/destination to others? Please explain:

Yes, I would definitely recommend this destination to others. In this report I might be negative about things, but the things I am negative about are things I feel a top tier Chinese university should have fixed properly. Take for example the lack of English speaking personnel, bad hygiene, and problems with course subscription. Those are a few things a university should have arranged in a proper way.

But besides these negatives, the whole experience in China has been more than wonderful. There are no words that can describe an exchange. You go to (in my case) the other side of the world, to a place you know nothing about. You meet great people, get to know a totally different culture and you get to know yourself in a different and better way. The latter is maybe especially true for China since you can simply not fall back on your English knowledge to fix things. You need to improvise and learn a different language.

Do you have any additional advice or comments?:

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